



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**\$20 Million in Grants Available for Broadband Transmission Services**

**Lincoln, Neb., July 25**—The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service is accepting competitive applications for \$20 million in grant funds that are available in fiscal year 2002 for projects that provide broadband transmission services to rural America.

The RUS Broadband Pilot Grant program, also referred to as the Community Connect Broadband Grant program, proposes to provide broadband transmission service on a "community-oriented connectivity" basis. This approach will target rural, economically-challenged communities and offer a means for the deployment of broadband transmission services to rural schools, libraries, education centers, health care providers, law enforcement agencies, public safety organizations as well as residents and businesses. This all-encompassing connectivity concept will give small, rural communities a chance to benefit from the advance technologies that are necessary to foster economic growth, provide quality education and health care opportunities, and increase and enhance public safety efforts.

Public bodies, Indian tribes, cooperatives, nonprofits, limited dividend or mutual associations; municipalities; incorporated or limited liability companies; or other legally organized entities are eligible to apply. Applicants may not be individuals or partnerships.

To be eligible for a grant, the project must propose: to serve a rural area where broadband transmission service does not currently exist; propose to serve one community; deploy basic broadband transmission service, free of all charges for at least two years, to all critical community facilities located within the proposed service area; deploy basic broadband transmission service, free of all charges for at least two years, to the community center; offer basic broadband transmission service to all residential and business customers within the proposed service area; and provide a community center within the proposed service area and make broadband transmission service available, free of all charges to users within the center for at least two years.

Grant funds may be used to finance: a) the construction, acquisition, or lease of facilities, including spectrum, to deploy broadband transmission services to all critical community facilities and to offer such service to all residential and business customers located within the proposed service area; b) the improvement, expansion, construction, or acquisition of a community center that furnishes free access to broadband Internet service, provided that the community center is open and accessible to area residents before and after normal working hours and on weekends; c) end-user equipment needed to carry out the project; d) operating expenses incurred in providing broadband transmission service to critical community facilities for the first two years of operations and to provide training and instruction; and e) the purchase of land, buildings or building construction needed to carry out the project.

Grant funds may not be used to finance the duplication of any existing broadband transmission services provided by other entities. Facilities financed with grant funds cannot be utilized, in any way, to provide local exchange telecommunications service to any person or entity already receiving such services.

Applications for grants must be postmarked no later than November 5, 2002. Applications are to be submitted to Roberta D. Purcell, Assistant Administrator, Telecommunications Program, Rural Utilities Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP 1590, Room 4056-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-1590. Express mail or hand delivery of the applications is encouraged due to the current disruption in mail delivery service. A copy of the Notice of Funding Availability and Application Guide for the Community Connect Broadband Grant Program can be found at <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/dlt/dlt.htm>. Click on Latest Initiatives and then Community Connect Broadband Grant Program.



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RUS will give applications priority in rural areas that it believes have the greatest need for broadband transmission services. An application is limited to including only one project. Applicants wishing to serve multiple projects must submit an application for each project. Applicants will be required to provide a minimum matching contribution that is equal to 15 percent of the grant amount awarded by RUS.

For further application information contact Ken Chandler, Director, Southwest Area, Telecommunications, Rural Utilities Service, USDA, STOP 1597, 1400 Independence Avenue SW., Washington, DC 20250-1597. Telephone: (202) 720-0800 or in Nebraska contact Andre Boening, Rural Utilities Service-General Field Representative (402) 543-2129.

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